

23 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

South Vietnam: Estimated Manpower Balance,
Age Group 15-45, 1967

Summary

It is not possible at the present time to make a firm estimate of the manpower resources available to the Viet Cong because of an almost complete lack of population statistics on South Vietnam. Nevertheless, on the basis of certain assumptions about the sex, age and control of the population, it is estimated that the Viet Cong have at best some degree of access to a pool of about 2.5 to 2.6 million people between the ages of 15 and 45, exclusive of those currently in Viet Cong service. Of this total, about 1.0 million are males and 1.5 million females. Almost 60 percent of these people, however, are in contested areas where Viet Cong recruitment has become difficult. As a result, those readily available for Viet Cong recruitment would number only 1.0 to 1.1 million consisting of 420,000 to 450,000 males and 620,000 to 630,000 females. Moreover, about 25 percent of these people probably are physically unfit for service with the Viet Cong.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Research and Reports and was coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of National Estimates.

Availability of Statistics

1. Population and manpower statistics on South Vietnam are inadequate to permit a reliable estimate of the manpower resources available to the Viet Cong. These statistics allow such a wide range of Viet Cong manpower estimates that they exclude neither the possibility that the Viet Cong are running out of useable manpower nor the opposite possibility that they have ample supplies of manpower.

2. South Vietnam population statistics are rough approximations at best and many of the most basic data are lacking. The last national census was in the 1930's. Since then there has been no systematic study of the rural population. A partial census of major cities was taken in 1958, but there is no measure of the growth of the urban population. There are no estimates of the distribution of the total (or rural) population by age or, except in the aggregate, by sex, although some sample studies of age and sex distribution have been undertaken in a few urban areas. Employment data cover only GVN military, GVN and US employed civilians, and some of the larger industrial establishments.

Assumptions

3. In an attempt to estimate the manpower situation in South Vietnam, the following assumptions were made:

- a. The current total population of South Vietnam is 16.5 million.
- b. Population totals 9.9 million (60 percent) in areas under GVN control; 2.75 million (16.7 percent) in those under VC control; and the remaining 3.85 million in contested areas.
- c. Roughly 45 percent of the population is in the age group 15 through 45 in South Vietnam as a whole and in the controlled and contested areas.
- d. The male-female ratio for the total population and for the population in the controlled and contested areas is 47-53 percent.
- e. Present Viet Cong manpower, including military and political personnel numbers between 400,000 and 500,000.

GVN Controlled Population

4. Of the GVN controlled population in South Vietnam of 9.9 million, an estimated 4.455 million are in the age group 15 through 45. GVN employment is estimated to be 914,000, including the military services, national police, revolutionary development cadres and civil service; and 129,000 are employed by the US including military and civilian agencies. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] It is estimated that approximately 850,000 are employed in private non-agricultural occupations, and that an

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additional 300,000 are temporary refugees. Given these figures and the assumptions stated above, there is a residual of about 2.3 million persons unaccounted for in GVN controlled areas. Of these, slightly more than 70 percent are female -- a result of the fact that a larger percentage of males are accounted for in military service. It is known that the bulk of the residual is in rural areas and is engaged in private farming, forestry, and fishing. Because the area is presumably under GVN control, it possibly can be assumed that this population is generally not subject to VC recruitment.

Population Subject to Viet Cong Recruitment

5. The population in areas under Viet Cong control and in areas undergoing pacification (contested areas) totals about 6.6 million, of which 2.9% are assumed to be within the age group 15-45. Estimates of the numbers employed by the Viet Cong are under current scrutiny and may soon be revised. For purposes of this paper, Viet Cong forces within the ages 15-45 are estimated to range from 384,000 to 480,000, including regular main and local military forces, guerrillas, administrative service units, militia, and political cadre. The residual available population in Viet Cong controlled and in contested areas numbers about 2.5 million. Of this population available for recruitment by the Viet Cong males would make up 1.0 to 1.1 million, given the assumed sex distribution.

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6. An estimate of a million males of military age does not at first glance support the increasing number of reports indicating Viet Cong recruiting difficulties. About 50 percent of these males, however, are in contested areas, according to our assumption on "control" areas, and recruiting in contested areas has become increasingly difficult as the GVN and US military forces make more frequent incursions therein. The readily available male population -- that in VC-controlled areas -- exclusive of those already in service would be in the range 420,000 to 460,000. Possibly 25 percent of these would be unfit for useful service. The remaining eligible males in the VC-controlled areas would number less than 400,000.

7. A similar situation exists with regard to the availability of females for recruitment by the Viet Cong. Of a total of roughly 1.5 million females potentially available to the VC, slightly less than 60 percent are assumed to be in contested areas where VC recruitment has become difficult. The readily available female population, exclusive of those already in service, would range between 620,000 and 630,000, not all of which would be physically fit for service with the Viet Cong.

8. The population available to the Viet Cong is largely rural. Almost one-half of total VC-controlled population is in the delta area. Rice production in the delta provides a major portion of Viet Cong food requirements and an important source of

revenue for the Viet Cong. Although women have always played an important role in Vietnamese agriculture it is still necessary to have able bodied males perform certain of the tasks in rice farming. It is not possible, without serious loss of productivity, therefore, for the Viet Cong to press into service all of the able males from the farms.

Limitations of the Analysis

9. All of the assumptions made in this study are important to the results, but two of them are crucial. These are the age distribution and the sex distribution of the population according to the areas of control. In the absence of data, we have used the same age distribution for the total population and for the population under VC control, in contested areas, and under GVN control. It is possible, however, that with the shift of population from rural areas to urban areas and the build-up of military forces the percentage of the age group 15-45 remaining in rural areas may be smaller than in urban areas. Since VC controlled and contested areas are primarily rural, this suggests that a smaller percentage of the population in these areas than in the total population is in the age group 15-45. If the age group 15-45, represented, for example, only 40 percent of the total population in VC controlled and contested (rural) areas, instead of the 45 percent assumed, the 2.5 million available military age manpower would be reduced to about

2.2 million, and the 1.0 to 1.1 million persons readily available for Viet Cong recruitment would be reduced to about 900,000, of which about 420,000 would be males.

10. Similarly, the same sex ratio of 47 percent male to 53 percent female has been used for the total population and the populations under VC control, in contested areas, and under GVN control. Migration to urban areas and the drafting of males for military service has increased the percentage of females in the rural population. The question is from which rural areas did the population shift come? The assumption in this study as to the male-female ratio by area is consistent with the assumption that the GVN recruited only in the areas it controls. But some of the GVN recruitment must have come from other areas. If females in the VC-controlled and contested areas (almost all rural) were as much as 60 percent of the population, instead of the 53 percent assumed, the male population of about 1.0 million estimated to be available for recruitment by the Viet Cong would be reduced to about 800,000, and that assumed readily available would number about 340,000.

SOUTH VIETNAM: Estimated Manpower Balance,*
Age Group 15-45, 1967

(In Thousands)

Line		Totals	Male	Female
1	Total population	16,500	7,755	8,745
2	Population, ages 15-45	7,425	3,490	3,935
3	GVN Employed Of which:	914	881	33
4	GVN Military	660	660	0
5	GVN National Police	61	61	0
6	GVN RD Cadres	33	32	1
7	GVN Civil Service	160	128	32
8	US Employment of Vietnamese Of which:	129	58	71
9	US Military	78	35	43
10	US Contractors	47	21	26
11	US Civilian Agencies	4	2	2
12	Private Sector - non-agriculture	453	427	426
13	Refugees	300	100	200
14	Total Accounted for, GVN control	2,196	1,466	730
15	Total GVN controlled, ages 15-45	4,455	2,094	2,361
16	Not accounted for, GVN control (rural)	2,259	628	1,631
17	Total in VC controlled areas	1,238	582	656
18	Total in contested areas	1,732	814	918
19	Estimated VC manpower, ages 15-45	304-480	312-304	72-96
20	Available to VC, in VC controlled and contested areas	2,490-2,586	1,012-1,004	1,478-1,502

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